

Jayne Bryant AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Iechyd Meddwl a'r Blynyddoedd Cynnar
Minister for Mental Health & Early Years



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our ref: MA JB 5056 24

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair
Equality and Social Justice Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

18 June 2024

Dear Jenny,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend and provide oral evidence at the Equality and Social Justice Committee on 13th May.

During my attendance at Committee several follow up notes were requested. I am pleased to provide a response to those notes below.

What level 2, 3 and 5 etc. requirements mean in the childcare context? How does this correspond to how qualified people are?

The [National Minimum Standards \(NMS\)](#) outline the requirement for childcare and playwork staff to hold qualifications appropriate to their post as set out below. The NMS also sets out the proportion of staff who should hold particular qualifications.

Child Minder

Child minders must have successfully completed an appropriate preregistration course recognised in the Social Care Wales's Qualification Framework before undertaking child minding.

Any assistant employed by a child minder must have successfully completed an appropriate course recognised in the Social Care Wales's Qualification Framework.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Day Care Settings

Person in Charge (manager)

Prior to their appointment, a person in charge must have:

- At least 2 years' experience of working in a day care setting.

AND

- At least a level 3 qualification recognised on the Social Care Wales's Qualification Framework or The Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales List of Required Qualifications for Playwork (or any lists which supersede them) which is appropriate to the post.

*Within a **day care setting** for children between the ages of 0 to 12 years, the person in charge should hold both:*

- At least a level 3 childcare qualification recognised on the Social Care Wales's Qualification Framework

AND

- At least a level 3 playwork qualification or a smaller award as recognised on The Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales List of Required Qualifications for Playwork (or any lists which supersedes this).

*Within **Play Provision** for children from 5 years old up to the age of 12 years, the person in charge should hold at least:*

- a level 3 playwork qualification recognised on The Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales List of Required Qualifications for Playwork (or any lists which supersedes this).

*Within a **holiday play scheme**, the person in charge should hold at least:*

- a level 3 playwork qualification, as set out in The Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales List of Required Qualifications for Playwork (or any lists which supersedes this).
- a level 3 qualification in a related sector AND the Managing a Holiday Play Scheme Award, as set out in The Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales List of Required Qualifications for Playwork (or any lists which supersedes this).

Other Staff

For sessional care (Childcare for children from aged 2 to 4 years, which is for less than a continuous period of 4 hours in any one day on non-domestic premises. It may include playgroups, cylchoedd meithrin, wrap around care, funded education places and free childcare places.)

- at least 40% of all 'other staff' hold a qualification at least at level 2 from the Social Care Wales's Qualification Framework or The Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales List of Required Qualifications for Playwork (or any lists which supersede them) which is appropriate to the post. AND at least half of these have a qualification at level 3.
- at least another 10% of all 'other staff' must be "working towards" a level 2 or 3 qualification.
- unqualified or volunteer staff members cannot exceed 50% of total staff.

For Open Access Play (normally for children from 5 to 12 years, provided by staff and operating for over 2 hours a day and more than 5 days in a year. Can be permanent or temporary provision, located in a variety of settings with or without premises and can include holiday play schemes. The purpose is to provide staffed play opportunities for children, usually in the absence of their parents).

- at least 40% of all 'other staff' hold a level 2 playwork qualification as recognised on The Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales List of Required Qualifications for Playwork (or any lists which supersedes this) which is appropriate to the post AND at least half of these have a qualification at level 3.
- at least another 10% of all 'other staff' must be "working towards" a level 2 or 3 qualification.
- unqualified or volunteer staff members cannot exceed 50% of total staff.

For Full Day Care

- At least 60% of all 'other staff' hold a qualification at least at level 2 on the Social Care Wales's Qualification Framework AND at least half of these have a qualification at level 3. (For full day care settings for children between the ages of 0 to 12 years, staff may also be required to hold a qualification as recognised on the Playwork Education and Training Council for Wales List of Required Qualifications for Playwork (or any lists which supersede them) which is appropriate to the post).
- at least another 20% of all 'other staff' must be "working towards" a level 2 or 3 qualification.
- unqualified or volunteer staff members cannot exceed 20% of total staff.

In addition to the childcare qualification requirements, the NMS sets out the requirements for mandatory first aid and safeguarding training.

Accepted qualifications

In order to work as a qualified member of staff in a childcare setting in Wales, your qualification must be recognised on the early years and childcare aspect of Social Care Wales's [qualification framework](#). The framework sets out current qualifications as well as legacy qualifications which are accepted.

Accepted qualifications need to meet the design principles, a set of criteria which Welsh qualifications must have to be included on the framework. These are:

- based on the National Occupational Standards that are appropriate to the needs of the sector
- based on assessing competence in the workplace
- subject to external verification
- based on reliable and robust demonstration of employer and service needs
- able to be aligned to qualifications frameworks across the UK
- based on a structure that allows progression routes, as well as opportunities to study breadth and/or depth of knowledge and skill
- able to respond flexibly to the needs of the sector and its learners, including delivery models, language, and accessibility
- able to recognise different types of learning, knowledge, skills, and competence.

Following a review of childcare qualifications, a suite of new qualifications from level 2 to 5 were developed and introduced from 2019. The Children's Care, Play, Learning and Development (CCPLD) qualifications are now the main recognised qualifications for working in childcare (although previously accepted qualifications, known as legacy qualifications are still accepted).

Flying Start Qualification Requirements

The Flying Start childcare guidance explains that staff appointed to work in Flying Start childcare settings must be of the highest calibre in order to deliver high quality provision. Staff should be responsive, affectionate and readily available. They should be committed to their work with children and to the ethos of enhanced quality, which is a cornerstone of the

Flying Start programme. To enhance and support children’s development, staff should be appropriately trained ([Qualification Framework - Social Care Wales](#)) and staff development should ensure continuity, stability and also improve quality ([Continuing Professional Development \(CPD\) - Social Care Wales](#)).

Staff working in Flying Start settings must have experience of working with young children and must have the qualifications outlined within Social Care Wales’s Qualification Framework to work within the Early Years and Childcare Sector in Wales. The list identifies the qualifications required to work within Flying Start. It sets out the current qualifications required (and equivalents), past qualifications which are accepted and suggested work-based qualifications for career progression and CPD.

Where staff do not have the required qualification, the Flying Start plan must show how and by when staff will be trained to the required standard. This will need to be monitored by the Childcare Advisory Team to ensure that progress is on schedule and qualifications are completed within the agreed time.

Flying Start childminders:

Childminders feature as part of the suite of providers offering quality Flying Start childcare services across a number of local authorities in Wales. Childminders can play a vital role in ensuring that Flying Start childcare meets the needs of parents or carers and uphold the professional and quality standards which are a feature of Flying Start childcare provision. Welsh Government guidance directs local authorities to ensure that Childcare Advisory Teams should work with and support childminders so that 2–3-year-olds in their care receive high quality childcare services. The Welsh Government has provided flexibility in the level of qualifications required for individual childminders to engage with Flying Start provision in order to reduce barriers to provision. For qualification requirements, a childminder who doesn’t work with an assistant(s) is defined as a Flying Start Practitioner and a childminder who does work with a childminder assistant(s) in the setting is defined as a [Flying Start Leader](#).

Foundation Learning Qualification requirements

The qualification requirements for settings funded to deliver education are set out, based on the type of setting the provision is delivered within, in the National Minimum Standards and, based on the role, within SCW’s qualifications framework.

Qualification Levels in the childcare sector

Table 1 below illustrates that of those childcare workers currently employed in registered services Self Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) data reports that almost half (47 percent) hold a Level 3 childcare qualification with 15 percent of the workforce holding a Level 5 childcare qualification. Around 17 percent hold no relevant qualifications.

Table 1: Number and percentage of childcare practitioners who hold selected qualifications

	Number	Percentage
Total number of childcare practitioners	14,091	100%
Childcare Practitioners with Childrens Care Learning and Development qualification at level 2	1,316	9%

Childcare Practitioners with Childrens Care Learning and Development qualification at level 3	6,606	47%
Childcare Practitioners with Preparing For Leadership Qualification At Level 4	177	1%
Childcare Practitioners with Childrens Care Learning and Development qualification at level 5	174	1%
Childcare Practitioners with Childcare Qualifications At Level 5	2,159	15%
Childcare Practitioners with Qualification relevant to childcare but not listed	1,283	9%
Childcare Practitioners with No formal Childcare Practitioner qualifications	2,376	17%

Source, Care Inspectorate Wales Self Assessment of Service Statement (SASS)

A copy of the evaluation produced with Care Inspectorate Wales

During February 2023, we asked for volunteers from the childcare and play sector to take part in a pilot of our new improvement meetings. The pilot was launched in April 2023 and ran until the end of June 2023.

We were delighted that 90 providers offered their time to take part in the pilot and we carried out a total of 60 improvement meetings.

After each meeting, we sent a survey to each provider and inspector to seek their views on the whole process. We used this information to inform our evaluation and we published a summary of our findings. [Childcare & Play - Improvement meeting pilot findings](#). The proposal going forward is to call these quality meetings rather than improvement meetings.

The number of local authorities that use childcare as an intervention for children in need

Family Information Services (FIS) are based within each local authority and can offer information, guidance and advice to families on many issues. They are experienced in guiding parents to services which can help their family circumstances, and this includes offering up to date information on local, registered childcare settings.

Our Families First programme is there to help families in need of extra help. Families First gives local authorities the flexibility to provide tailored support for children and families. The primary focus of childcare within the Families First guidance is about providing childcare as a means to encourage one of both parents to attend services where childcare might otherwise have prevented parents from engaging.

While we hold information on the number of children receiving social care and support, we do not have specific information on which local authorities actively use childcare as an intervention.

Flying Start services can be delivered through the Outreach element of the programme to high need children and families living outside of recognised Flying Start areas. It is for Local Authorities to determine the best way of offering this support within the budget agreed by the Welsh Government.

I hope that you find the above useful and I look forward to receiving an update from the Committee once the follow-up inquiry into this important area of work concludes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jayne". The script is cursive and fluid, with the 'J' and 'y' being particularly prominent.

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